

# COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN



## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

For Immediate Release  
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### **Davis To Hold First Hearing on Administration's New Plan for Combating Pandemic Flu**

*Hearing Also Will Examine How Telecommuting, Other Strategies  
Aim to Keep Government Operating in Event of Flu Outbreak*

**What:** Government Reform Committee Oversight Hearing,  
“Working Through an Outbreak: Pandemic Flu Planning and  
Continuity of Operations”

**When:** THURSDAY, May 11, 2006, 10:00 A.M.

**Where:** ROOM 2154, RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

**Background:** U.S. public health officials and international scientists are warning that a flu pandemic is the No. 1 public health threat facing the world today.

The Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918-1919 caused an estimated 40 to 50 million deaths worldwide, and some scientists predict that the next flu pandemic will be just as severe, and may occur within the next five years. Experts have projected that more than half a million Americans could die, and over two million could be hospitalized in the event of a U.S. pandemic flu outbreak.

**Thursday's hearing will be the first Congressional hearing since the Administration last week announced its Implementation Plan for dealing with an influenza outbreak, continuing Chairman Davis's important work in this field.** In November, the Committee hosted the first testimony of Health and Human Services Secretary Michael O. Leavitt following President Bush's unveiling of the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza and has held previous hearings on shortage of flu shots and the government's ability to continue operating in a medical or other emergency.

The new Implementation Plan translates the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza into direction and guidance for federal departments and agencies and sets clear expectations for state and local governments, communities, and the private sector on the development of their own plans. The plan acknowledges the limits of the federal government and highlights the importance of preparedness by individuals, communities, and the private sector.

The plan predicts enormous economic and societal disruptions caused by an influenza pandemic, creating unique challenges for the coordination of the federal response. The past few annual influenza seasons, as well as recent avian flu activity in Asia, continue to raise the urgent question of whether the U.S. is prepared to deal with a flu pandemic and whether the country is capable of working through a pandemic.

A key part of the government's implementation plan is its emphasis on telework to ensure essential government operations can continue during a pandemic, when it may not be possible or advisable for employees to be in the same room. Much to Chairman Davis' frustration, the federal government has long lagged behind the private sector in promoting telework – despite the traffic, energy, cost, productivity and employee morale benefits it can provide. Davis is hopeful the pandemic plan will spur the government to take serious strides in getting more employees to become teleworkers.

**Witnesses:**

Panel I

John O. Agwunobi, M.D., Assistant Secretary for Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Linda Springer, Director, Office of Personnel Management

David M. Walker, Comptroller General, Government Accountability Office

Dr. Jeffrey W. Runge, Chief Medical Officer, Department of Homeland Security

Panel II

Dr. Alonzo Plough, Board of Directors, Trust for America's Health

Scott Kriens, Chairman and CEO, Juniper Networks

Paul B. Kurtz, Executive Director, Cyber Security Industry Alliance

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